Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31 [[1]], said performing step including the step of contacting said sample with a quantity of HCV antigen.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31 [[1]], said performance of said antibody-based assay providing results indicating whether said sample is antibody positive or antibody negative.

5-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 31 [[1]], said method permitting a prediction having ~~certain probability being~~ at least [[a]] an 80% probability that the individual providing said fluid sample has ~~of having~~ chronic HCV infection.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 [[1]], said ~~certain probability being~~ prediction having at least a 90% probability that the individual providing said fluid sample has

~~of having~~ chronic HCV infection.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 [[1]], said ~~certain probability being~~ prediction having at least a 95% probability that the individual providing said fluid sample has ~~of having~~ chronic HCV infection.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 [[1]], said ~~certain probability being~~ prediction having at least a 97% probability that the individual providing said fluid sample has ~~of having~~ chronic HCV infection.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 7 [[1]], said ~~certain~~ method permitting a prediction that the individual has a probability ~~being~~ of less than [[a]] 50% ~~probability~~ of having chronic HCV infection.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of predicting whether an individual providing a biological fluid sample testing positive for HCV antibodies from an HCV antibody assay capable of detecting more than one HCV antibody has chronic HCV infection, said method comprising the steps of:

measuring the optical density of ~~said~~ a second fluid sample, said second fluid sample comprising said biological fluid sample and HCV antigen from said HCV antibody assay; and

correlating said measured optical density with a predetermined standard optical density value

derived from individuals known to have chronic HCV infection; and ~~the probability~~ predicting that the individual providing the fluid sample has chronic HCV infection based on said correlation.

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, said ~~correlating~~ predicting step including the step of comparing said measured optical density with optical density ranges corresponding to certain probabilities that the individual has ~~of~~ chronic HCV infection.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, said optical density ranges providing at least ~~60%~~ 80% accuracy levels for any measured optical density level.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, said certain probability that the individual has chronic HCV infection being less than about 10% when said measured optical density is less than 1.0 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, said certain probability that the individual has chronic HCV infection being less than about 15% when said measured optical density is less than 2.35 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, said certain probability that

the individual has chronic HCV infection being greater than about 70% when said measured optical density is greater than about 2.35 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, said certain probability that the individual has chronic HCV infection being greater than about 80% when said measured optical density is greater than 3.0 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of ~~determining the probability~~ predicting that an individual testing positive for HCV infection using an antibody-based assay capable of detecting more than one HCV antibody is infected with chronic HCV, said method comprising the steps of:

obtaining a fluid sample from the individual;

contacting said fluid sample with HCV antigen to form a solution;

determining the optical density of said solution; and

comparing said determined optical density with a set of standard optical density values correlated with probabilities of chronic HCV infection.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, said comparing step including the step of using said standard optical density values to provide the probability that said individual has chronic HCV infection.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, said probability increasing as said determined optical density increases.

22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, said probability being less than 20% when said determined optical density is less than about 1.0 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, said probability being less than 20% when said determined optical density is less than about 2.35 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, said probability being greater than 70% when said determined optical density is more than about 2.35 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

25. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 20, said probability being greater than about 80% when said determined optical density is more than about 3.0 in comparison to a negative control which must have an optical density of 0.1 or less at 660 nm.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of testing for chronic HCV infection comprising the steps of:

obtaining a fluid sample;

forming a solution with said fluid sample and HCV antigen from an HCV antibody-based assay;

~~performing an antibody-based assay capable of detecting more than one HCV antibody on said sample;~~

measuring the optical density of said solution ~~sample~~; and

using said measured optical density ~~to~~ as a test for chronic HCV infection.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26, said measured optical density being correlated with the probability that said sample contains chronic HCV infection.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, said probability increasing as said measured optical density increases.

29. (Original) The method of claim 27, said probability decreasing as said measured optical density decreases.

30. (Original) The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of using said measured optical density to determine whether said sample contains chronic HCV infection.

31. (New) A method of predicting whether or not an individual has chronic HCV infection comprising the steps of:

obtaining a fluid sample from the individual;

performing an antibody-based assay on said sample, said assay including antigen to HCV antibodies;

determining the optical density of said sample after said antibody-based assay is performed; and

using the optical density to predict whether the individual has chronic HCV infection by comparing the determined optical density with a correlation curve based on the optical densities of fluid samples in combination with HCV antigen from an HCV antibody-based assay from individuals having chronic HCV infection and individuals that have cleared the HCV infection but still test positive for HCV antibodies.